



CITY COUNCIL

Nominations & Appointments Committee

**Monday, April 2, 2012
Meeting Report**

Attendance: S. Marmarou, R. Corcoran

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm by Mr. Marmarou.

I. Interviews

Paul Hoh (reappointment – Library Board)

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Hoh was interested in continuing to serve in this position. Mr. Hoh stated that after leaving Council he wished to place his time and energy into an area in the City in great need. He stated that he has chosen the library as they were and continue to be under duress. He noted the need for alternative funding sources. He stated that during the initial negotiations with the County regarding the library, the \$900,000 was to cover personnel costs. He stated that this amount was never adjusted and the City continued to cover costs until they were mandated to reduce funding in the Recovery Plan. He stated that State funding has also decreased and the hours that the libraries are open have decreased. He stated that a meeting is being scheduled in Harrisburg with the library oversight personnel and the City's State representatives.

Mr. Hoh stated that hostility continues with the County as the library started an e-reader program and now the County wants to take the program and take credit for creating it.

Ms. Reed arrived at this time.

Mr. Hoh stated that public libraries are crucial and must remain open.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the library had solicited corporations for donations. Mr. Hoh stated that several fundraising events have been held. He stated that solicitation is occurring for funding and for specific gifts, such as computers.

Ms. Reed questioned if Board members make contributions. Mr. Hoh stated that they do. He stated that with the new membership, more members are willing to fundraise and make individual contributions.

Ms. Reed noted the need to increase fundraising as public funds decrease. Mr. Hoh acknowledged this but stated that it would be difficult to fundraise \$2.5 million annually.

Ms. Reed questioned the use of grants. Mr. Hoh stated that typically grants are for new programs. He stated that the library should be funded largely through tax dollars and fundraising should be for extra items. He stated that the library has had difficulty breaking into the local fundraising arena.

Mr. Marmarou questioned using professional fundraisers. Mr. Hoh stated that they have been looked at but that they seem too costly. He stated that the Board continues to work on this issue and that they have begun a legacy society to solicit additional donations. He stated that the Reading's main branch is a Carnegie library.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the reappointment of Paul Hoh to the Library Board.

Andrew Molteni (reappointment – Environmental Advisory Council)

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Molteni wished to continue serving on the EAC. Mr. Molteni stated that serving in this capacity gives him the chance to stay involved in science. He stated that it allows him to focus on a task to bring relevance to an issue.

Mr. Corcoran questioned the challenges of the EAC and if Council could assist in addressing them. Mr. Molteni noted the need for a higher consciousness is necessary. He noted that the EAC has a Council representative who has not attended meetings for many months.

Ms. Reed suggested that Mr. Molteni email his messages to Council rather than provide hard copies. Mr. Molteni noted his trust that Council will recycle the paper. He expressed the belief that some things are better in hard copy.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the reappointment of Andrew Moteni to the Environmental Advisory Council.

Valerie Zelle Phelps (appointment – Human Relations Commission)

Mr. Marmarou noted the importance of the Human Relations Commission. He questioned how Ms. Phelps learned of this opening. Ms. Phelps stated that she has attended Fair Housing events hosted by the Human Relations Commission in the past. She stated that her mother (Hazel Black) served in this capacity for many years and she wished to give back to the City. She noted her wish to help people in need.

Ms. Reed thanked Ms. Phelps for her willingness to serve. She noted that her background in property management would make Ms. Phelps a great candidate for this position.

Mr. Corcoran thanked Ms. Phelps. He noted that the people of the City make a difference.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of Valerie Zelle Phelps to the Human Relations Commission.

James Radwanski (appointment – Redevelopment Authority)

Mr. Marmarou questioned how Mr. Radwanski learned of this opening and why he is interested in serving. Mr. Radwanski stated that he owns many properties in the City and has been involved in the City for thirty years. He noted his wish to improve the City. He stated that he was recruited to this position by a current member of the Authority.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if Mr. Radwanski had attended any meetings to date and if he understood this authority's duties. Mr. Radwanski stated that he has had a brief review.

Mr. Marmarou questioned Mr. Radwanski's ideas to make improvements to the City. Mr. Radwanski stated that there are positive people on this Authority. He stated that he is a type A personality and has lots of energy to participate and make change.

Mr. Marmarou requested that the Redevelopment Authority report to Council in the near future. Mr. Radwanski noted the need of more people to get involved and not just complain about the City.

Ms. Reed noted the autonomous nature of authorities. She stated that she has heard a proposal to move this authority under the auspices of the Community Development Department. She expressed her belief that this would be a Charter violation. She questioned if Mr. Radwanski would guarantee that this authority would remain autonomous. She noted the importance of this authority with the work of the Blighted Property Review Committee and the independent funding of this authority. Mr. Radwanski stated that the City needs growth. He noted that with the right group and with motivation the City can improve.

Mr. Marmarou noted the questionable redevelopment tactics used in the past.

Ms. Reed again voiced her concern that this authority remains autonomous. She stated that she will be watching closely.

Mr. Corcoran questioned the properties owned by Mr. Radwanski. Mr. Radwanski stated that he owns several commercial properties. Ms. Reed noted the improvements made and that the properties have improved the neighborhood.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the appointment of James Radwanski to the Redevelopment Authority.

Lee Olsen (reappointment – Blighted Property Review Committee)

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Olsen wished to continue serving in this capacity. Mr. Olsen stated that he has been a member of the BPRC since its formation. He noted the excellent work of the City Clerk in carrying out the duties of the BPRC. He noted that the process has been greatly streamlined and that there are no attendance issues.

Mr. Olsen noted the need for additional funding to continue the work of the BPRC. He stated that quarterly meetings are held with the City's housing partners to discuss their willingness to rehabilitate blighted properties. He noted that a goal of the BPRC is to de-densify the City. He stated that the State average for rental properties is approximately 29% - Reading's is 59%. He noted the need to increase owner occupancy.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the status of the African American Museum project. Mr. Olsen stated that his firm is working on this project. He stated that the County ADD program has contacted the property owners of those properties needed to expand the property and move the project forward. He stated that only one property owner is willing to sell. The rest of the properties must be taken by eminent domain.

Mr. Olsen stated that the former City administration earmarked \$500,000 toward demolition of the properties in the capital budget. He stated that in addition, there is an RACP for a \$3 million matching grant for the project. This means that the African American Museum must raise \$3 million in a capital campaign to move the project forward. He noted the need to begin fundraising and to meet with the new City administration in the near future.

Mr. Marmarou questioned when the project would begin. Mr. Olsen noted the need of the Museum to raise the \$3 million through their capital campaign before work can begin. He stated that a fundraising committee has been formed but that they have not met since December 2011.

Ms. Reed thanked Mr. Olsen for his service to the City. She stated that she enjoyed working with him during her time as Council representative to the BPRC.

Mr. Olsen again thanked Ms. Kelleher and her staff for making the BPRC look good.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the reappointment of Lee Olsen to the Blighted Property Review Committee.

II. Park and Recreation Advisory Committee/Recreation Commission

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned if the PARC should continue now that the Recreation Commission has been formed. The Committee suggested that the PARC be disbanded to alleviate any confusion with the Recreation Commission.

Ms. Katzenmoyer will draft the legislation and work with the law office before moving the legislation forward.

III. Recreation Commission

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that Mr. Hall received the "Thank You for Serving" letter and there has been no response. She reviewed the resolution removing Mr. Hall from the Recreation Commission. The Committee approved the resolution.

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned who the Committee would like to appoint to replace Mr. Hall. Mr. Marmarou and Ms. Reed suggested that Mr. Taddei be contacted. Mr. Corcoran stated that he reviewed the applications and interviews with the other candidates and stated that he trusted the judgment of Mr. Marmarou and Ms. Reed in nominating Mr. Taddei.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that she will contact Mr. Taddei to see if he is still interested in serving in this capacity. The Committee recommended moving forward as quickly as possible.

IV. Other

Mr. Marmarou stated that he has heard that the City has purchased faulty fire equipment. He requested that this item be placed on the Public Works, Public Safety, and Neighborhood Services Committee agenda.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee adjourned at 4:37 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Shelly Katzenmoyer,
Deputy City Clerk